

THE SIN OF REVILING, AND ITS WORK.

A

FUNERAL SERMON,

OCCASIONED BY THE ASSASSINATION OF

PRESIDENT LINCOLN,

APRIL 14TH, 1865.

BY

W. R. GORDON, D.D.,

PASTOR OF THE REF. PROT. DUTCH CHURCH OF SCHRAALENBERG, N. J.

Preached on May 7, 1865.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF CONSISTORY.

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S E R M O N .



ACTS 23 : 5.

It is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the Ruler of thy people.

THE connection of this text contributes much to make it emphatic. Paul had been rescued from the violence of a Jewish mob by a military force, whose captain had subsequently assembled the Sanhedrim to try his case. The High-Priest then presiding was bound to protect the prisoner in the right of making his defence, but he was guilty of the outrage of commanding them that stood nearest to smite him on the mouth. Paul's instinctive indignation prompted him to return this answer : " God shall smite thee, thou whited wall ; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law ? "

Horried by this unexpected display of daring boldness, some of the members of that notable court thus remonstrated : " Revilest thou God's high-priest ? " Paul, not recognizing his claim to that office illegally procured, or having been so long absent from Jerusalem that he was not aware of the change made in the incumbent, immediately said in extenuation of his haste : " I wist not, brethren, that he was the high-priest ; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people. " This special prohibition is found in Ex. 22 : 28 : " Thou shalt not revile the judges, nor curse the ruler of thy people. "

God is the author of civil society. He has ordained laws for its protection and government, and a magistracy for their execution. He has also made special enactments, such as Paul quoted, for its safety in the execution of political trust,

throwing around the office the solemn sanction of his authority. This was so well understood among the Jews, that however obnoxious any particular magistrate might become, his *office* was sure to protect him from wanton insult as well as from personal danger. Hence the exclamation, "Revilest thou?" Had not Paul explained, he would have been held guilty of a grave offence, since it was contrary to the law of Moses to speak ill of a magistrate, even in a clandestine manner. The highest office of government was especially held in reverence. Those who from neglect failed to render the veneration due to his character, had given offence to the king, were liable to the infliction of capital punishment. Now there are many forms of evil-speaking, all of which are condemned in the word of God, but the special form of the sin here spoken of, is that of REVILING.

But what is reviling? It is treating a person with vile epithets of language, cursing him, wishing him harm, and loading his character with reproaches and railing accusation. Whoever did this among the Hebrews, respecting their Chief-Magistrate, though in private, subjected himself, upon discovery, to the penalty of death. How such revilers were regarded, and with what sentiments of abhorrence their sin was looked upon, we learn from scripture. The general law which should regulate public opinion on this point, is thus expressed by Solomon: "Curse not the king, no not in thy thoughts." A king is simply the chief-magistrate in a monarchy, and bears the same general relation to it that a president bears to a republic; and as the Bible is for all nations, it is evident that the law of God respecting magistracy is applicable to all forms of government among men. Keeping this in view, we shall readily understand that the teachings of Scripture must be supremely regarded by all Christian men, in the discharge of their *civil* as well as religious duties.

"My son, fear thou the Lord and the king; and meddle not with them that are given to change." (Prov. 14: 21.)

"Whosoever will not do the law of thy God and of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment." (Ezra 7: 26.)

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers, for there is no power but of God : the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God ; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” (Rom. 13 : 1, 2.)

“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake ; whether it be to the king as supreme, or unto governors as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men : as free, and not USING LIBERTY FOR A CLOAK OF MALICIOUSNESS, but as the servants of God. Fear God. Honor the king.” (1 Peter 2 : 13–17.)

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the judgment-day to be punished ; but CHIEFLY them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise governments. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities ; whereas angels which are great in power and might bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord ; but these, as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not ; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” (2 Peter 2 : 8–12.)

Paul thus enjoins the *duty of political preaching* upon ministers : “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.” (Tit. 3 : 1, 2.)

Thus you will perceive, that God, having clothed magistracy with divine sanctions, has not only enforced obedience, but sternly denounced the sin of traducing those of high official character. The Thirty-seventh Article of Faith of the Reformed Dutch Church accordingly has this language : “It is the bounden duty of every one, of what state, quality, or condition soever he may be, to subject himself to the magistrates ; to pay tribute, to show due honor and respect to them, and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the word of God ; to supplicate for them in their prayers. Where-

fore we detest the Anabaptists* and other seditious people, and in general all those who reject the higher powers and magistrates, and would subvert justice, and confound that decency and good order which God has established among men."

From the authority quoted, we are warranted to make this general deduction : REVILING THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, IS A CRIME AGAINST GOD, AND AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT. This we prove from two considerations.

1. The practice of reviling is an abuse of the faculty of speech, and altogether reprehensible. It discovers in the guilty a bitterness of spirit, an envious nature, a malicious disposition, the indulgence of which is sure to recoil upon themselves. It makes them injurious members of society, corrupting in their influence, and dangerous to public morals. Hence, according to Paul, such persons are not to be tolerated in the Church of God. "I have now written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother, be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a RAILER—with such an one, no not to eat." "For neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor REVILERS shall inherit the kingdom of God." This text puts such persons in the worst of company, because they work iniquity in the most dangerous way, "using liberty for a cloak of maliciousness;" or as the Psalmist expresses it, they "whet their tongues like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words." The reviler labors to fabricate a public sentiment which shall ultimately injure the man against whom he speaks. This is his direct object. Solomon says, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof;" that is, they that love to use the power of the tongue, shall reap the fruit of their speech, according as it is influential to the death or life of the person of whom they speak, "for by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

In the Sermon on the Mount, our Saviour thus discourses : "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of

* A seditious sect of the sixteenth century.

the judgment; but I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment, and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca—a word of bitter contempt—“shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, THOU FOOL, shall be in danger of hell-fire.” The original of the term translated “thou fool,” is a very different thing from that word as now commonly used among us. It signifies all those bad qualities that make one an enemy of God and man. We have no single term in our language that can translate it. It combines the ideas of impiety, apostasy, tyranny, odiousness of character, and hell-desert. Whosoever uses these expressions of reviling to brand with infamy the fair name of any man, according to the exposition of Christ, is a murderer in his heart, and in danger of hell-fire. Hence John says: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.”

2. Crimes are great or small in accordance with their issues, and the relative standing of those against whom they are committed. The life of a man may be mainly valuable to himself, or beyond himself to a family, or beyond a family to a nation. Should he be murdered, the act is the same, whatever relations he may have held; but the iniquity of the act must be graduated by the value of the life, services, and position of the person thus felled by the hand of violence. This seems to have been always generally understood, for we find comparatively few instances in history of the assassination of men in high positions of political power. Julius Caesar was thus murdered in the Roman Senate, March fifteenth, forty-four years before Christ. William, Prince of Orange, the founder of Dutch freedom, whose venerated name will ever be a blazing star in history, was assassinated at the instigation of the Jesuits, July tenth, A.D. 1584. Henry the Fourth, said to be the best king that ever occupied the throne of France, who granted to his Protestant subjects entire religious freedom by the Edict of Nantes, was also assassinated by the Jesuits, A.D. 1610. Our own noble Lincoln, the victim of an execrable conspiracy, was thus deprived of life, April fourteenth, A.D. 1865.

Between each of these horrible tragedies there is, more or less, a long series of years; and the inference is natural, that while assassins have been numerous, and murders multiplied

in every age, few have been found of courage sufficiently desperate and despicable to strike at the lives of men in high official position, notwithstanding greater exposure to the shafts of enmity. This has been owing, in a large measure, to the fact, that the common-sense of mankind has always been impressed with reverence for the office of chief ruler. He who strikes at him who holds it, must first strike at the office before he can reach the officer ; and as a preparatory step, they who encourage the assassin by *reviling* his victim, must be guilty of treasonable language against the government itself with whose interests the officer is intrusted. This is clear from the awful tragedy that has recently overflowed our cup of affliction. No one had any *personal* quarrel with Mr. Lincoln, but as President, he was reviled ; as President, he was hated ; as President, he was murdered.

No matter to what party our Chief-Magistrate may belong, no matter what policy he may adopt in the sworn execution of his trust, the simple facts of his election and assumption of the oath of office imply a corresponding obligation upon the part of the whole people whose common service he enters, to protect him from defamation as well as from danger. This principle lies at the basis of all law, for however we may separate them in thought, government and its administration practically are indivisible ; for one without the other is a mere abstraction. A political heresy is afloat, that the government and its administration are so entirely different, that the former shall not suffer, though the latter be assailed and hurled from its place. This is absurd. You might as well say, life and the machinery of life are two different things, therefore the machinery may be disarranged without the life being endangered. No, the office, and the officer legally installed, must share the same protection. Now as reviling a ruler and his official acts leads to wrath, and wrath to conspiracies, and conspiracies to personal danger, it is clear that this reviling is criminal, because it is both incipient treason and the support of felons, who plead it in extenuation of their crimes. Moreover, as treasonable words lead to treasonable deeds, even to the extent of overt crime, as in the case of our late President, the guilt of the latter fearfully recoils upon all who, in violation

of the citizen's obligation while enjoying his privileges, have abused and persecuted the honest ruler who has fallen a victim to consequent violence, because they have helped to manufacture a treasonable public sentiment pervading a mischievous faction, which has issued in the blackest crime.

Therefore while in human law there was but one murderer of our Chief-Magistrate, according to divine law there are hundreds of them, and perhaps thousands who survive the single wretch. That the doctrine of the Scriptures on this point is not misstated, we prove by brief references. Paul says: "Be not partaker of other men's sins." That this does not refer merely to busy accomplices, we prove from 2 John 11: "*He that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.*" Now here is the annunciation of a general principle whose spirit pervades the whole Bible—Ps. 51: 14; Acts 8: 1; Luke 23: 51; and in the light of it, we say that whoever applauds this crime, or feels a secret satisfaction that it has been done, or thinks well of it, as a happy stroke by which the hated ruler has been put out of the way, is a murderer in his heart, and as such he is regarded and held by the law of God. Thus we think it becomes evident, that reviling the President of the United States is a crime against God, and against the Government under which we live, and should meet with its proper punishment; for if a bad magistrate must be protected in his office until legally removed, what must be the guilt of that portion of any people who, "using liberty as a cloak of maliciousness," revile a good magistrate, until his innocent life be taken by some villain whose bloody work is an agreeable surprise to their criminal hearts?

That Abraham Lincoln was a good magistrate is the unanimous verdict of all competent to pronounce upon the subject. His qualities of intellectual and moral worth have shone all the more conspicuously for incessant use, and the friction of hard trials. We do not intend to speak of him as a private citizen, but as the Ruler of his people. Called to the administration when the horrible crime of the South, which had been maturing for more than thirty years, had culminated in treason no less wide-spread than malignant; beset with unusual difficulties and novel dangers, and a man untried and unknown to

the mass of the people, he was at the mercy of that power for good and evil, the public press. By the hostile portion of it he was bitterly assailed in a reviling spirit, and before he had entered upon the discharge of his duties, this reviling had prepared for him the pistol and dagger of the assassin ; but having made his way though danger to the Capitol, he fearlessly took the oath of office amid a multitude of political friends and foes. During the delivery of his first inaugural address, the lamented Douglas, his rival, beautifully showed by a courteous act, that political opposition need not be in conflict with personal friendship. The feeling was mutual. One of our neighbors* visited the President last May, and during the interview, informed him that at his first election he had voted for his opponent, whereupon Mr. Lincoln led off in a eulogy upon Mr. Douglas, declaring a purpose to employ his own pen in doing justice to his character. We mention this only to show, that opposition to a chief-magistrate purely on principles of administrative policy is perfectly fair, and by no means inconsistent with the honor or duty of any citizen. Oh ! if all men had followed the example of these political opponents who thought and spoke well of each other, our country would not now be draped in mourning for the death of her Chief, nor humbled by the crime of paricide. But the deed is done, and a nation's flowing tears and expensive testimonials are demonstrative of the fact that no ruler exalted to the highest seat of honor in the wide world, has ever been so lovingly clasped by millions of hearts whose affections were drawn out by the attractions of his character.

Our martyr patriot was providentially placed, from the very outset, in the midst of the strangest and most embarrassing difficulties that ever arose in our country. His novel situation awoke the liveliest interest in his behalf, as well as great anxiety as to his fitness for the perilous exigencies of the hour. His enemies were multiplied by the revilings of the adverse portion of the press, which had succeeded in exciting some little fear among his friends ; but the first thing that assured their confidence was his farewell address when he left

* Hon. Thomas H. Herring.

his Illinois home. In that speech, on February eleventh, 1861, he said :

“A duty devolves upon me which is perhaps greater than that which has devolved upon any man since the days of Washington. He never would have succeeded except for the aid of Divine Providence, upon which he at all times relied. I feel that I cannot succeed, without the same divine aid which sustained him ; and on the same Almighty Being I place my reliance for support, and I hope you, my friends, will all pray that I may receive that divine assistance without which I cannot succeed, but with which success is certain.”

This earnest, touching appeal made its way directly to every Christian heart. It drew out the sympathy of the wise and the good of other lands besides our own, as the morning sun draws vapors from the earth ; and from that hour the breath of prayer has been burdened for him, until he reached the happy place where dangers no more cluster, where prayer is no more needed.

It was not long before the private life of ABRAHAM LINCOLN became familiar to the people. Made to pass under the severest scrutiny of a merciless investigation, like the unfallen snow, it was found spotless, his enemies being judges. This result of their diligence ought to have operated in his favor, but it did not seem in the least to abate their rancor or reviling. If not as bad as he might be, he must be made out worse than he was, purely as a political measure ! Though reviled, he reviled not again, but uncomplainingly and patiently set to work to subdue a gigantic rebellion the like of which the world never saw. Fully impressed with the stupendous issues to be determined by this conflict, he rose to the dignity of the position, realized its vast responsibility, and with an unfaltering trust in God, pursued a steady course marked by wisdom, and revealing the patriotic purpose to restore peace to our land preserved from the execution of the horrid design of the most desperate foe. How well he succeeded, none need now be told. Whatever may have been said to the contrary, circumstances, purposes, plans carried out, conquests, and steady progress have proved that he was a man exactly adapted to the situation : of quick perception :

of calm and sound judgment; and of great intellectual and executive ability. His integrity of heart, honesty of aim, truthfulness of nature, his gentleness in firmness, his thoughtful prudence, his loving-kindness and social turn, his subordination of all to an incorruptible patriotism, and his hearty reliance on God for every thing needed to insure success, not only expressed publicly and in private, but manifested by daily expositions of conduct, formed the rarest assemblage of dignifying qualities that ever shone in human character, as a constellation in mid-heaven.

Four years of hard trial only served to burnish the gold and remove the dross. The hearts of the people lodged full confidence in him, and this they proved to him by the immense majorities with which he was carried into the second term of office. He was so devoid of ambition, so fully in love with the right, so bent upon doing his whole duty, so devoted to the best interests of his country, and yet so mercifully inclined toward the rebels, that the people saw at once, by the light of the past, that he was the best one to trust for the future, until our calamities should vanish away. If any additional pledge for this popular confidence was needed, it was given in his second inaugural, which, alas! proved to be his farewell address. He concluded it in these memorable words:

“With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widows and his orphans, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.”

Shortly after this, he had the satisfaction to see the rebellion broken down; but O our misfortune! Only one month and ten days elapsed, when the assassin reached and took his life: yet his work was done, and well done, and ABRAHAM LINCOLN, washed with tears, was embalmed in the imperishable love of a grateful people.

That he was not only a good magistrate, but also a Christian man, I must believe from two facts. His sterling honesty was proverbial, and had become so inwrought in his nature by

long habit, that he never could have been a successful hypocrite, if he had tried ; therefore his uniform out-spoken faith in God's favoring providence, hope in his goodness, and trust in his mercy, must be accepted as proof of his Christianity. Never since my remembrance, and perhaps never, have we had a President so free from the common frailties of men top-mast in position, and so liberal of devout sentiment evidently real, in his public utterances. His pastor surely is a competent witness. "I speak," said he, "what I know, and testify what I have often heard him say, when I affirm that God's guidance and mercy were the props on which he humbly and habitually leaned ; that they were the best hope he had for himself and for his country." "Never shall I forget the emphasis and the deep emotion with which he said in this very room to a company of clergymen and others who called to pay him their respects in the darkest day of our civil conflict : 'Gentlemen, my hope of success in this great and terrible struggle rests on that immutable foundation, the justness and goodness of God. And when events are very threatening, and prospects very dark, I still hope that in some way which man cannot see, all will be well in the end, because our cause is just, and God is on our side.'"

But, it is said, Mr. Lincoln perished in a theatre. We readily grant that he ought not to have been there. We regret it, because we believe the theatre to be the devil's school-house ; but at the same time we lament to say many professing Christians have been there before him, by whose base example he might have been misled. We do not excuse him ; but we must state in fairness to all concerned, that he was there, more from a desire not to disappoint an expectant audience, than from any self-prompting.

Passing this, we adduce, in further proof of his Christian character, this fact, as given by Rev. Mr. Carey, of Illinois :

"A gentleman, having recently visited Washington on business with the President, was, on leaving home, requested by a friend to ask Mr. Lincoln *whether he loved Jesus*. The business being completed, the question was kindly asked. The President buried his face in his handkerchief, turned away, and wept. He then turned, and said : 'When I left

home to take the chair of state, I requested my countrymen to pray for me: I was not then a Christian. When my son died, the sorest trial of my life, I was not a Christian. But when I went to Gettysburgh, and looked upon the graves of our dead heroes, who had fallen in the defence of their country, I then and there consecrated myself to Christ. *I do love Jesus.*'”

Such is the living character of this good man and honest ruler upon whom reviling tongues and pens hounded the assassin. As far as known, he never had a personal enemy until he undertook to save his dear Columbia from assassination, and when he had succeeded, and because he had succeeded, he was assassinated himself. Faithful Lincoln died; Columbia his passionate lover lives, and weeps upon his coffin. Henceforth, Mount Vernon and Oak Ridge Cemetery shall share her love, and be kept green by the watering of her tears.

“In the God of battles trust!
 Die we may—die we must;
 But oh! where can dust to dust
 Be consigned so well,
 As where heaven its dew's shall shed
 On the martyred patriot's bed,
 And the rocks shall raise their head
 Of his deeds to tell?”

Of all the distinguished rulers of the earth, no other one has ever been borne to the tomb amid such extensive preparations to do him honor. His funeral procession may be said to have been more than one thousand miles long! On each side of the track over which the escort passed, mourning citizens did all that the ingenuity of affection could devise, by day and by night, to testify their sense of the great loss sustained; and in that portion of it which streamed through the city of New-York, taking hours to pass a given point, none had a better right than the lowly company of blacks representing the freedmen, who regarded the President as their “good friend.” They carried a plain white banner, bearing these touching mottoes: “Our Emancipator.” “To thousands of bondmen he gave liberty.” Yes, the poor tortured

slave never drew more largely upon any heart that ached for his relief. Mr. Lincoln believed in universal freedom to all God's creatures. He showed how deeply he felt, that

“Fleecy locks and black complexion
Cannot forfeit nature's claim ;
Skins may differ, but affection
Dwells in black and white the same.”

God rules, and most fearfully has he answered the prayers, and the groans, and the tears of millions in this land, who have lived and died the victims of heart-rending oppression. God has so combined circumstances in his wonder-working providence, that the mad fanaticism of slavery insulting freedom should be the means of its own extinction amid the execrations of the world ; and the *terrible retribution* comes by the hands of one elevated to honor and power from among the most despised class of the Southern population ! History, in doing justice to our “Great Emancipator,” will inscribe upon his tablet the sentiment of Cowper to Wilberforce :

“Enjoy what thou hast won, esteem and love,
From all the just on earth, and all the blest above.”

But it will no doubt be said, that superlative eulogy upon the departed must be expected from his admirers ; and while the late catastrophe will dispose all to silent acquiescence, yet the proper discount must not be forgotten in the due estimate of his character. To meet this in advance, we shall seek our justification in quotations from those very prints that have done the most for his defamation. A world-wide celebrated sheet, well known for the bitterness of its opposition to Mr. Lincoln when he was alive, upon the announcement of his tragic death put on mourning ; and, under the date of April seventeenth, thus soberly discoursed :

“When the most experienced and reputable statesmen of the country came to opposite conclusions, it is creditable to the strength, solidity, and modesty of Mr. Lincoln's mind that he acted with a cautious and hesitating deliberation proportioned rather to a sense of his great responsibilities than to a

theatrical notion of political stage effect." "If we look for the elements of character which have contributed to the extraordinary and constantly growing popularity of Mr. Lincoln, they are not far to seek. The kindly, companionable, jovial turn of his disposition, free from every taint of affectation, puerile vanity, or *parvenu* insolence, conveyed a strong impression of worth, sense, and solidity, as well as goodness of heart. He never disclosed the slightest symptom that he was dazzled or elated by his great position, or that it was incumbent upon him to be any body but plain Abraham Lincoln." "His freedom from any such upstart affectations was one of the good points of his character; it betokened his genuineness and sincerity." "The total abstinence from Mr. Lincoln's sentiments and bearing of any thing lofty or chivalric, and the hesitating slowness of his decisions, did not denote any feebleness of character. He has given a signal proof of a strong and manly nature in the fact, that although he surrounded himself with the most considerable and experienced statesmen of his party, none of them were able to take advantage of his inexperience and gain any conspicuous ascendancy over him. All his chief decisions have been his own; formed, indeed, after much anxious and brooding consultation, but in the final result, the fruit of his own independent volition." "The loss of such a man, in such a crisis; of a man who possessed so large and growing a share of the public confidence, and whose administration has recently borrowed new lustre from the crowning achievements of our armies; of a ruler whom victory was inspiring with the wise and paternal magnanimity which sought to make the conciliation as cordial as the strife has been deadly: the loss of such a President, at such a conjuncture, is an afflicting dispensation which bows a disappointed and stricken nation in sorrow more deep, sincere, and universal than ever before supplicated the compassion of pitying Heaven."

This is well said, and has only the disadvantage of being *extorted* truth. Coming from the editorial columns of the print referred to, and put in contrast with its former relentless persecution of this good man, and now confessedly, well-deserving President, it must be perfectly amazing to all those

who have accredited it with honesty, and have yielded their feelings to its guidance.

Again, we take up another widely circulated daily newspaper of the same date, still more remarkable for its vituperative language. About a month before his death, referring to the President and Vice-President, it informed us that we had “a *jester* and a *drunkard* at the head of the Government.” But now we find it in mourning too, and pouring out incense to the former victim of its gross abuse. We read the following :

“It is as if a pall overhung the land, and in the shadow of it dwelled a chilled and awe-struck people. A brotherhood of sorrow—sorrow so poignant that it makes strong men weep, and veteran soldiers shudder—has brought all classes and all parties to the drear level of companions in misfortune.” “And indeed it has rarely happened that a people have been visited with such cause for lamentation. Had it pleased God, by disease or accident, to take from us our Chief-Magistrate, the stroke would have been less ; but to see him stricken down by the brutal rage of an assassin, murdered at the very threshold of the gate of peace he was about to open, abruptly hurled from his sphere of usefulness at the crisis of the Republic’s fate, in such a misfortune, all that is horrible and pitiable and calamitous has been concentrated into one fatal moment to overwhelm the country with affliction.” “Mr. Lincoln, of those in power, was the best friend of the South. In his kind-heartedness, he withstood and baffled the vindictiveness and fanaticism of the radicals of his party. It is known that he had prepared and was about to publish a Proclamation of General Amnesty, so conciliatory in its tone, and so honorable in its conditions, that it would have been acceptable to a large portion of the South, as well as the conservative people of the North.” “No fitter requiem to Abraham Lincoln than the song of peace swelling from the grateful hearts of his countrymen.”

These editorials go to the extreme of eulogy, and while they are gratifying to the friends of the deceased, though coming in strange contrast with previous ones of a very opposite character from the same source, they must be amazing

to his enemies, whom they thus acknowledge to have deceived by a false presentation and cruel persecution of a character the most illustrious among men. The formers and leaders of opinions which have been encouragement to "Knights of the Golden Circle," and to traitors of every hue, present beautiful sketches of the moral and official worth of the man whom, when living, they reviled; when dead, they affect to honor!

In the progress of the latter panegyric, we meet the exclamation: "O the disgrace of it, the shame of it, the peril, if ever that crime should be identified with the American character!" Now, with the American character it can never be identified; the loyal masses have taken care of that: but with those who have employed the press, in the detestable service of *reviling*, it must be identified by the law of God, and the rectified opinion of people betrayed into a vindictive feeling against the ruler of our country. Did the bullet of the assassin suddenly change a *tyrant* into "the best friend of the South"? "O shame! where is thy blush?"

Although these utterances, if honest, can be considered only as intonations of the penitence of remorse, we gladly accept them as confirmatory of what has been said in simple justice to the distinguished character of the honored dead. "He rests from his labors, and his works do follow him." "The righteous shall be held in everlasting remembrance; but the name of the wicked shall rot." "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God." While American literature shall last, Bryant's beautiful commemorative poem shall live:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

O slow to smite, and swift to spare,
Gentle, and merciful, and just!
Who in the fear of God didst bear
The sword of power, a nation's trust!

In sorrow by thy bier we stand,
Amid the awe that hushes all,
And speak the anguish of a land
That shook with horror at thy fall.

Thy task is done ; the bond are free ;
 We bear thee to an honored grave,
 Whose proudest monument shall be
 The broken fetters of the slave.

Pure was thy life ; its bloody close
 Hath placed thee with the sons of light,
 Among the noble hosts of those
 Who perished in the cause of Right.

Before closing, I wish to impress upon my hearers that I speak from no partisan feeling, nor in the interest of any party or administration as such, but in the behalf of our Government and the Rulers of our people. Any other course would be a desecration of Sabbath and Pulpit, and an imposition upon my audience. But let it be understood, that while party politics must not be brought into the sphere of religion, religion must be carried into politics, because God has commanded it. All the old Prophets were politicians, and the leaders of political opinion. They gave constant instruction to the people, on the subject of their political duties ; and Paul, the Apostle, as you have heard, is very emphatic on this point. Every gospel minister is bound, by his example, to enforce in the pulpit the great principles of Christian obligation to the State, applicable to all alike, leaving it to the conscience and honesty of every man to carry them out by the loyalty of his conduct, in any party with which his own convictions of duty shall lead him to operate. Whatever others may do, it is the duty of the men of the Church to listen to the voice of the pulpit on this point, so long as the moral law is made a subject of exposition, and so long as the precept of Christ is binding : "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's."

We are now called to mourn over a mighty calamity, which demands that the pulpit shall speak out. Humiliated by the present dreadful state of public morals, as they relate to politics, it becomes us to reflect upon the direful causes which have contributed to this awful tragedy. We have more reason to weep for ourselves than we have to mourn for our never-to-be-forgotten President, who fell a victim to villainy in the rightful discharge of his duties. If this treasonable spirit

which pervades the North, in complicity with Southern rebellion, is not speedily put down, it will not be long before a reign of terror, like that which desolated France in former days, shall be roaring like a tornado over the land. The struggle for party purposes and power among us, is carried on too often irrespective of the means by which they should be attained, and of the legitimate end for which parties exist. Therefore it becomes every good man to reform or leave every party that is guilty of this perversion. What but party rancor and wrath have brought about this deplorable state of things? And oh! what an absurdity! Are we not all brethren? Are we not all bound up in the same great national interest? Is it wise to let the ship of state run upon breakers, because of a contest about who shall hold the helm? Shall mutiny among the mariners be allowable, when the possible result may be the destruction of ship and cargo and all on board? Surely we must see that instant reformation must be made, or all will be lost. Every man of us has therefore a duty to perform toward the Ruler of his people and all in official subordination, which he cannot evade and be guiltless.

1. When any party succeeds in placing its men in power, it is the duty of all to cease opposition, and make the best of it. We are responsible to God, who is the Author of civil society, for our conduct in the political relations of life we hold. He is a God of order and not of confusion, and those who work confusion in civil society meet with stern rebukes in his word. Our Government is God's production. The administration of it is a solemn trust from Him to us, and woe to the man who feloniously interferes with its legitimate operations. Rival parties are well enough, so long as they serve as mutual checks; but whatever party is in power, it is the solemn duty of its antagonist to protect it in the enjoyments of its rights, and aid it in compassing the ends of good government and human happiness. If errors of administration occur, reviling is not the way to correct them; nor breeding confusion the way of promoting the public interest.

2. It is the duty, inseparable from moral order, of every man to refrain from speaking evil of the Ruler of his people.

The President of our country is placed in possession of an important trust, the honorable and conscientious discharge of which, so far as can be, is secured by his oath of office. Now, when he takes this oath, every citizen comes under a corresponding obligation, underlying and implied in the privilege of citizenship, to obey in all things the requirements of law; and this involves the further duty of rendering such a personal respect for his office's sake, that the President shall not be reviled by tongue or pen; because all such reviling contributes to the damage of his official character and to his personal danger.

Had all our Northern people acted according to this obvious duty, I believe Mr. Lincoln would not have met a violent death. Some may say that the immediate tools of the rebellion killed him; but when we are horrified by many of the North feloniously clapping hands over his murder, how can we avoid the conclusion that much of the dreadful sentiment responsible for the bloody deed originated at the North? May God forgive all his detractors, and wash away their murderous sin!

The safety of our institutions and the strength of our Government depend upon the intelligence and moral honesty of the masses. Nowhere has the Christian a better opportunity for doing good than in his political relations. Let him carry the influence of his religion into this great rolling sea of human conflict. Let his agency be especially directed to allay the fierceness of party strife, and by his colloquial powers and meekness of deportment aim to quiet the turbulence of those whose intemperance of language and violence of action always exert an evil influence dangerous to the Government. This country is largely indebted for its political greatness to the Church of Christ. From the beginning, religious and civil freedom have gone hand in hand for mutual protection and the common welfare. And unless the spirit of the religion of Christ continue to shed its benignant influence in regulating and directing public opinion with regard to official stations, our republican government will soon find its grave in the anarchy of infidel recklessness and disregard of human rights. Conflicting opinions and rival ambitions, uncontrolled by a supreme regard to the authority of God and the majesty of

law, and directed by the unholy aims of the ill-designing, will bring down to the dust our political fabric, to the joy of all despots and the disgrace and ruin of the theory of democracy.

Now there is nothing to prevent this but the diffusion of intelligence and the religious enlightenment of the public conscience. This is a sphere of action in which every Christian and good citizen will find a large work for himself to do. Hitherto, the wonderful transmission of the Administration of this great Government from one party to another, by the quiet power of the ballot-box, without the intimidation of armed men, and bloody scenes enacted by lawless desperadoes, has been almost regarded as a miracle by the powers of Europe. But now, for the first time in our history, the wild fury of party strife has brought upon us humiliation and disgrace in the eyes of the world. Oh! it is a fearful precedent; and unless the needed reformation be at once begun, by those who stand at the head of public influence, and who so largely control public opinion, diffusing by the press a spirit of loyalty or insubordination, as they see fit; unless every well-meaning man does his duty toward the general Government, no matter what party administer it, we have the gloomy prospect that the reign of terror, by the agency of wickedness, will soon put the extinguisher upon republican freedom. Let, then, the sins of the *reviling tongue* be checked, and the dangers from the spirit of treason will be evaded. Let the pure principles of the Gospel more pervadingly enter our political affairs and economical arrangements, and our beautiful country shall out-ride the storm that has so fearfully endangered her existence. Hitherto she has proved a safe asylum for all who have come to her shores. Religious persecution may be almost said never to have disgraced our land. Liberty of conscience and civil rights we have been always taught to respect, and the march of improvement has never been called to a halt. We therefore owe it to God, we owe it to ourselves, we owe it to the world, that every man be a sentinel upon the walls of freedom, ever ready to do his whole duty to his country and her rulers.

“As ye would that men shall do to you, do ye even so to them.” This simple all-comprehensive rule, is the best safe-guard of public and private rights; and if it be deeply impressed upon

the public conscience, and made the basis of action in our political duties, the smiles of heaven shall be our sunshine, and happiness and peace be domiciled in every habitation. Invoking the blessing and guidance of God upon all our rulers and our people, we close with this command and promise: "*Loose the bands of wickedness, undo the heavy burdens, LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE, BREAK EVERY YOKE. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.*" (Is. 58 : 6, 8.)

A REMINISCENCE.

THE unhappy close of life to our beloved President, has given to the following poem an impressive interest, and has suggested the propriety of its appearance in the present connection.

Mr. F. B. Carpenter, the artist, referring, in a letter to the *Evening Post*, to a certain occasion when Mr. Lincoln spoke feelingly of this poem observing that he would give a great deal to know who wrote it, says: "Then, half closing his eyes, he repeated to me the lines which I inclose to you. Greatly pleased and interested, I told him I would like, if ever an opportunity occurred, to write them down from his lips. He said he would some time try to give them to me. A few days afterward he asked me to accompany him to the temporary studio of Mr. Swayne, the sculptor, who was making a bust of him at the Treasury Department. While he was sitting for the bust, I was suddenly reminded of the poem, and said to him that *then* would be a good time to dictate it to me. He complied, and sitting upon some books at his feet, as nearly as I can remember, I wrote the lines down, one by one, from his lips."

OH! WHY SHOULD THE SPIRIT OF MORTAL BE PROUD?

Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift, fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid;

And the young and the old, and the low and the high
Shall moulder to dust, and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved ;
The mother that infant's affection who proved ;
The husband that mother and infant who blessed—
Each, all, are away to their dwellings of rest.

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne ;
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn ;
The eye of the sage and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap ;
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep ;
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

So the multitude goes, like the flower or the weed
That withers away to let others succeed ;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same that our fathers have been ;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen—
We drink the same stream and view the same sun—
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would think ;
From the death we are shrinking our fathers would shrink ;
To the life we are clinging they also would cling ;
But it speeds for us all, like a bird on the wing.

They loved, but the story we cannot unfold ;
They scorned, but the heart of the haughty is cold ;
They grieved, but no wail from their slumber will come ;
They joyed, but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died, ay ! they died ; we things that are now,
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwellings a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea ! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
We mingle together in sunshine and rain ;
And the smile and the tear, the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath ;
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud—
Oh ! why should the spirit of mortal be proud ?

